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## Improving the quality of life and well-being of rural residents

## KEYWORDS

rural development,  
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## ABSTRACT

**Introduction.** Improving the quality of life of rural residents is relevant for sustainable development of society, reducing social inequalities, and ensuring food security, which ultimately contributes to stability and prosperity at both local and national levels.

*The article aims to study the standard of living of rural residents and issues related to its improvement.*

**Materials and Methods.** The materials included articles from peer-reviewed periodicals and statistical reporting materials. We applied abstract-logical, monographic, calculative-constructive, comparative analysis, and statistical methods in the research.

**Results.** The authors analyze the activities carried out on the territory of the Russian Federation aimed to ensure integrated development of rural areas. Implementation of the State Program is designed for 6 years (2020-2025), with a total funding of 2.3 trillion RUR, including 1 trillion RUR from the federal budget (based on the results of the State Program 2020-2021).

**Conclusion.** Rural development assumes availability of financing sources, introduction of innovations, and creation of conditions for improving the quality of life with the active participation of local government in agrarian processes.

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## FOR CITATION

## **INTRODUCTION**

The article is relevant because in recent decades, migration to urban areas lead to a significant decrease in the rural population. This creates problems related to labor shortages; moreover, young people are leaving, and rural population is aging.

Rural areas often have limited access to investment and economic opportunities. Improving the quality of life can be done by creating jobs, developing local businesses, and increasing regional economic activity. Moreover, it implies availability of medical and educational facilities. Improving living conditions in villages can contribute to more sustainable agricultural practices and conservation of natural resources.

Thus, the topic is relevant, as the future of rural areas and society, which strives for sustainable development and quality of life, depends on a solution to these issues.

### ***Literature Review***

Z. Gedminaitė-Raudonė & V. Simonaitytė point out a need for a transition from the competitive and exploitative relations of the industrial era to the cooperative and synergetic relations of the post-industrial concept, including relations between people and nature, food consumers and farmers, and rural and urban areas [1].

O. G. Karataeva et al. writes that rural areas development and well-being depend on numerous socioeconomic factors of society development. Fuel deficit, limited fossil energy reserves, and the growing energy cost in agriculture are urgent world problems [2].

According to T. Giang, the issues of sustainable development of rural areas are closely related to the concept of rural multifunctionality, i.e., in any country, agriculture performs multidimensional functions. In addition to food production, it protects the environment, preserves the landscape, and provides employment for the population living in rural areas [3].

Y. Liu et al. write that the Chinese rural society is experiencing a decline in all spheres due to depopulation, aging, lack of economic opportunities, etc. Since 2017, China has been implementing a rural revitalization strategy and promoting integrated urban-rural development. According to the authors, research on issues focusing on theories and technologies of rural revitalization and development management is needed [4].

Liudmyla T. et al. found that the marketing concept of rural economic development is based on configuring different marketing concepts as components of a holistic structure. These components have standard marketing management technology at all levels of the system hierarchy, coordinated interaction mechanisms, and methods used to meet stakeholders' needs in rural economic development [5].

H. M. Lübker et al. investigates the perception of residents living in rural areas in northwestern Germany regarding the concept of economic growth. The authors identify four archetypes: (1) growth as a positive phenomenon, (2) growth as an alternative, (3) growth as a systemic constraint, and (4) growth with negative consequences [6].

Digital technologies play a crucial role in rural development, transforming the area's economy, social structure, and standard of living.

Based on correlation analysis, M. A. Babeshin et al. found that digital technologies have a significant potential to promote sustainable development of rural areas. In countries with the highest agriculture employment, the rural regions sustainability in 2020 was 42.38% due to the level of digitalization. The most significant opportunities for digitalization are reflected in sustainable rural development, such as improving farmers' access to finance (84.65%) and agricultural infrastructure (78.95%). The authors propose four directions of regulation: developing digital skills of the population, ensuring electronic participation of the population in public administration, developing telecommunication infrastructure, and protecting property rights [7].

According to T. V. Klenova et al., the concept of a Smart Village based on digital technologies can be an effective means of solving numerous problems in rural areas. The authors point out the limitations on the widespread use of digital technologies associated with possible negative consequences which are manifested in loss of several existing jobs and in emergence of new ones, changes in contractual relations between farms, and the need to preserve the identity of villages [8].

S. Zheng argues that with the help of Big Data technology, we can improve the efficiency of multiple agricultural activities such as sowing, fertilizing, harvesting, storing and breeding through scientific and diverse production and management practices. The author proposes a framework to analyze the impact of Big Data technology on China's regional rural economic system [9].

L. A. Gridin et al. propose introducing remote medical care in rural areas using high-speed mobile networks, artificial intelligence, and blockchain-based technologies for storing and processing large amounts of information. The authors show a possible algorithm for supporting medical personnel in diagnosing diseases and prescribing treatment within a single information space [10].

M. F. Hossain, a supporter of the concept of deurbanization, writes that deurbanization and rural development should be modernized according to five sustainability indicators: (1) environment, (2) energy, (3) construction, (4) infrastructure and transport, and (5) water supply [11].

R. G. Gracheva and A. V. Sheludkov cite the consequences of organic agriculture for the development of rural areas in Russia: mitigation of socio-economic contrasts between suburban and peripheral rural areas, preservation of traditional cultural landscapes, support for rural tourism, and promotion of environmental ideology in the agricultural sector and society [12].

As I. G. Ushachev, when solving the main problems of rural development in Russia, special attention is to be paid to the issues of employment, poverty, housing, quality drinking water, network gas, and road network development [13].

According to A. Ferrera, development of railroad transportation can improve the quality of life of the rural population. Considering Bangladesh, the authors argue that railroad lines would create an opportunity for small farmers to trade and export products such as rice, wheat, and cotton to more competitive markets [14].

O. Dah and T. B. Bassolet examine the impact of public financing of agricultural infrastructure on rural poverty reduction in West African Economic and Monetary Union states. The authors' results show that the quality of road infrastructure increases farmers' income and thus reduces rural poverty [15].

B. Bai et al. suggest that regional universities are to play an essential role in realizing regional rural revitalization, implementing rural social practice, and managing college students' local employment. In this way, we can recognize popularization of knowledge and compensate for the lack of social research in realizing national planning and construction [16].

D. F. da Silva Cavalcante et al. show that human and social capital are the main factors in commercializing family farm production. The authors argue the need to strengthen public policies aimed to educate farmers in the basics of market trade and product promotion and to promote commercialization as a rural development strategy [17].

According to Sabrina T. et al., even local educational institutions can be involved in rural development. For instance, students can participate in regional and international projects on agri-food marketing, rural branding, etc. [18].

Thus, the scientific problem of improving the quality of life and well-being of rural residents includes several key aspects. Numerous rural regions face limited access to jobs and professions, resulting in low income. In addition, low levels of education and lack of skills affect employment opportunities. Poor road conditions and lack of transportation hinder access to markets and services, particularly social and health services.

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

The materials were articles from peer-reviewed periodicals (Environmental Science and Pollution Research, Journal of Geographical Sciences, Sustainability Science, Advances in Intelligent Systems and Computing, Regional Research of Russia, SN Business & Economics, Human Ecology, Agricultural Economics) on social development, rural society, and quality of life.

The research materials were the data of the State Program of the Russian Federation, 'Integrated Development of Rural Areas', and materials of statistical reporting of the RF, its subjects, and the Ministry of Agriculture of the RF for the last decades. Abstract-logical, monographic, calculative-constructive, comparative analysis and statistical methods were used.

## **RESEARCH RESULTS**

Implementing the State Program of the Russian Federation, 'Integrated Development of Rural Areas' (hereinafter the State Program) began in the territory of Russia in 2020. The main objectives of the State Program are [19]:

- 1) maintaining the share of rural population in the total population of Russia at the level of at least 25.3%;
- 2) achieving a ratio of average monthly disposable resources of rural and urban households up to 80%;
- 3) increasing the share of the area of well-appointed housing in rural settlements by up to 50%.

The State Program has project and process sections.

The project section consists of five departmental projects. These include:

1. 'Development of housing construction in rural areas and enhancement of home improvement level';
2. 'Promotion of rural population employment';
3. 'Development of engineering infrastructure in rural areas';
4. 'Development of transportation infrastructure in rural areas';
5. 'Improvement of rural territories'.

The process section consists of three targeted departmental programs. These include:

1. 'Ensuring state monitoring of rural territories';
2. 'Analytical and information support for the integrated development of rural territories';
3. 'Modern image of rural territories'.

The State Program declares some regions of the country as territories of advanced development. These include the Far Eastern and North Caucasus Federal Districts, the Republics of Crimea, Sevastopol, Kaliningrad Oblast, and certain regions of Russia's Arctic zone.

Implementation of the State Program is designed for 6 years (2020-2025), with a total financing of 2.3 trillion RUR, including 1 trillion RUR at the expense of the federal budget. The Ministry of Agriculture of the RF, with Rosavtodor's participation, is the responsible executor of the State Program.

Implementation of the State Program measures began in 2020. In the Federal Law No. 380-FZ 'On the federal budget for 2020 and for the planning period of 2021 and 2022' of December 2, 2019, the budget allocations of the State Program are: 35,946.2 million RUR for 2020, 30,943.0 million RUR for 2021, 31,485.6 million RUR for 2022, 31486.4 million RUR for 2023 (see Table 1) [20].

**Table 1**

Financial support of the State Program in 2020-2023, million RUR

Sources of financing	2020	2021	2022	2023
In total	97 270,2	45 579,4	121 241,3	121 168,6
Federal budget	36 265,8	30 942,9	31 485,6 4	31 486,4
Consolidated budgets of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation	14 938,4	3 544,5	2298,1	2 030,0
Extrabudgetary sources	46 066,0	11 092,0	87 457,6	87 652,2

Table 2 presents data on the results of implementation of the State Program in 2020 and 2021. The level of execution of federal budget expenditures under the State Program in 2020 and 2021 amounted to 96.7 and 96.1% of the indicator of the consolidated budget statement.

In 2020 and 2021, unfulfilled budget allocations for implementing the State Program amounted to 1.2 and 1.5 billion RUR, or 3.6 and 3.7% of the consolidated budget statement.

The relatively low level of cash execution in certain areas of state support provided under the structural elements of the State Program is due to several factors:

- new coronavirus infection, COVID-19, on the territory of the Russian Federation;
- non-fulfillment of obligations under state (municipal) contracts, deviation from work schedule, delay in equipment delivery;
- untimely payment by the customer to the contractor for the work performed; lack of mechanisms for prompt redistribution of savings resulting from implementing activities for other activities of the State Program.

Table 2

## Results of the implementation of the State Program in 2020-2021

Goals of the State Program	By the end of 2020			By the end of 2021		
	Plan	Actual	Execution, %	Plan	Actual	Execution, %
Consolidated budget statement (with amendments), billion RUR	33, 8	32, 6	96,7	39, 7	38, 2	96,1
Share of rural population in the total population of the Russian Federation, %	25,3	25,3	100	25,2	25,6	102
Ratio of average monthly disposable resources of rural and urban households, %	68,3	67,3	98,5	70,6	67,3	95,3
Share of the total area of improved housing in rural settlements, %	33,4	37,5	112,3	35,4	38,0	107,3

The main factors that affected implementation of the State Program include, first and foremost, the new coronavirus infection and restrictive measures to combat it.

There is an increase in the mortality rate of the rural population, a decrease in the population's income due to the economic situation, and a deterioration of the situation in the labor market due to the new coronavirus infection (along with the update of Rosstat data on indicators for 2019-2020). All this entailed a slight change in the planned values of the goals of the State Program 'Preservation of the share of rural population in the total population of the Russian Federation' (25.3 and 25.6%), 'Achievement of the ratio of average monthly disposable resources of rural and urban households' (67.3%, in 2020 and 2021), as well as the indicators of the structural elements of the State Program on the level of employment (60.0 and 51.8%), and unemployment (7.2 and 8.4%) of the rural population [Ibid].

Notably, despite the unfavorable conditions created by the new coronavirus infection, the planned goals of the State Program in 2020 and 2021 for the share of the rural population in the total population of the Russian Federation were achieved (100 and 102%), for the ratio of average monthly disposable resources of rural and urban households – 98.5 and 95.3%, for the share of the total area of well-appointed housing in rural settlements – 112.3 and 107.3%. All this gives us optimism that the State Program was developed and launched promptly and that the planned goals will be achieved step by step until 2025.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Thus, rural territories are the backbone of the regional structure of rural municipalities. Their development is inextricably linked to the region's integrated, holistic, systemic management,

considering the natural-geographical, economic, national, and other specific features of rural areas. In modern conditions, the role of the rural regions in the regional and national economy increases. They are a connecting component between macro- and microeconomic levels, solving the tasks aimed to satisfy the socio-economic interests of the country's population and strengthen its well-being.

The development of rural areas presupposes the availability of funding sources, introduction of innovations, and creation of conditions for improving the quality of life with active participation of local governments in agrarian processes. This will improve access to food and social services, reduce unemployment, increase the income of the rural population, etc. It will contribute to the population inflow and enhance the village's economic situation.

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